



106 Washington Avenue, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901-4985

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 18, 2021
TO: Oshkosh Public Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, Library Director
RE: OPL COVID-19 Policies in Light of Recent Developments

President Christine Melms-Simon has agreed to call a special meeting of the Library Board to consider the status of OPL's policies that were put in place as a response to the COVID-19 health emergency.

Recent developments that may influence the Library Board's decision as to the continuing efficacy of the Temporary Rules of Behavior Policy and the Phase Two Re-Opening Plan service model are as follows:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended on May 12 that the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine be given to people age 12 to 15.
- The CDC announced on May 13 that fully vaccinated people may resume the activities they did prior to the pandemic. The CDC further stated that fully vaccinated people may cease wearing face masks or physically distancing (subject to specific rules put in place by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial laws, rules and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance).
- The Oshkosh Common Council voted on May 14 to lift the face mask mandate in the City of Oshkosh.
- The Winnebago County Health Department reports that the trend in the 7-day average probable-plus-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the county has dropped below 10 in the past week, although this level still warrants a "High" case burden rating by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.
- The Winnebago County Health Department reported on May 17 that 37.9% of the county's residents have been fully vaccinated.

"A Library in Every Life"

Two policy documents have guided staff response to the COVID-19 public health emergency during the past year: 1) The Temporary Rules of Behavior, and 2) the Phased Re-Opening Plans (currently Phase Two). Both of these policy documents were most recently revised by the Library Board at its January 28, 2021 meeting.

The latest revision of the Rules policy requires people age 2 or older to wear face masks, to observe physical distancing, to avoid gathering with people not of their own households, and prohibits children younger than 12 from visiting the Library without an accompanying adult.

The Phase Two Re-Opening Plan restored most access to the Library building. The main difference between Phase Two and “normal” library operations has been the effort to discourage people from gathering – in-person library-sponsored programs have not been offered and use of Library meeting spaces by outside parties has not been allowed. Curbside delivery of library materials has continued at a very low level of volume (4 to 5 patrons per day) and contactless check-out has been maintained with physical barriers at public service desks. Cleaning protocols have been maintained, although frequency of cleaning has been scaled back as the COVID-19 virus has increasingly been understood to transmit via airborne droplets.

Library Director’s Recommendation: It is my recommendation that the Library Board rescind the policies enacted to cope with the COVID-19 public health emergency, specifically the Temporary Library Rules of Behavior, and the Phase Two Re-Opening Plan.

I believe that, in Oshkosh and Winnebago County, trends indicate that the prevalence of the COVID-19 virus and the seriousness of its effects have diminished enough to warrant us beginning down the road to normal operations of the Oshkosh Public Library. The CDC guidelines and the action by the Oshkosh Common Council also put Library employees on an island of enforcement as long as these policies are maintained.

Library Board action to rescind the emergency policies will allow me to follow the lead of the Oshkosh City Manager, who has decided to allow employees to cease wearing face masks and keeping physical distance as they work in the city buildings. I am inclined to extend this to Library employees. Based on informal estimates, we believe that more than 90% of Library employees are fully vaccinated.

If the Library Board rescinds the emergency policies, restoration of in-person public programs and pre-pandemic uses of the meeting rooms will not be immediate. The summer 2021 program calendar has been set, and it does not include any in-person programs. We are also exploring community needs and potential service responses as a “Pandemic Recovery Center.” We will reserve use of meeting rooms to Library purposes until we know whether and how they might be needed to meet pandemic-related community needs.